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GREATEST BOXING BOOKS Definitive list
THE GYPSY KING How Tyson Fury inspires
BALBOA CHRONICLES Franchise in focus

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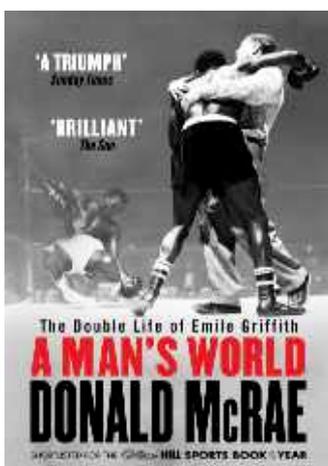
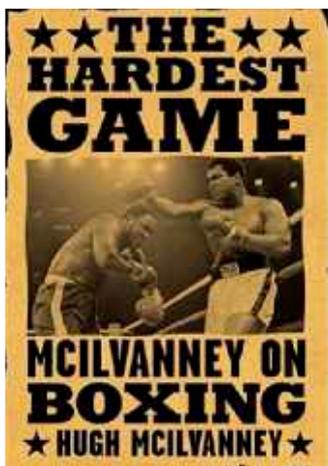
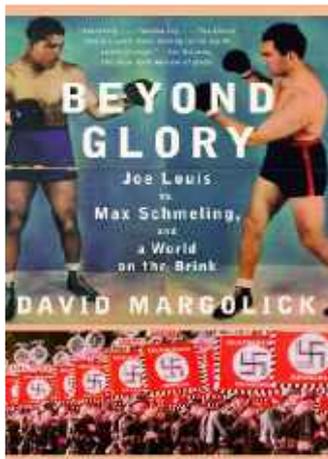
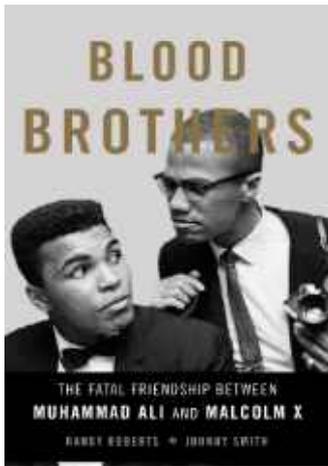
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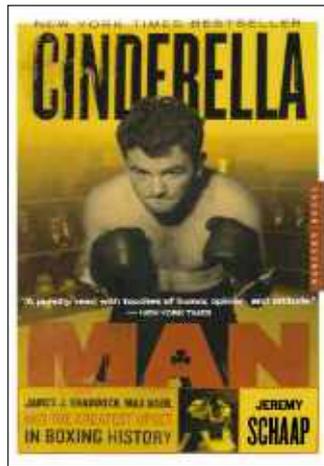
Canelo crushes Fielding to stamp his authority on 2018

HORROR SHOW

Plus WARRINGTON-FRAMPTON + WHYTE-CHISORA + INSIDE HBO BOXING + CALLUM SMITH + JOHNNY GARTON + ROY JONES JNR + HEAVYWEIGHT GIANTS



THE GREATEST BOXING



EACH year during the holiday season, I publish a list of what I consider to be the best books on boxing. That list, updated to accommodate recently published titles, follows. Taken together, the books offer a compelling look at the sweet science from bare-knuckle days to the present. Some of these books are now out of print. But with the proliferation of online services like Abebooks.com and Amazon.com, all of them can be found. I've listed the US publisher for each book, but many of them have been published in the UK as well.

BEYOND GLORY BY DAVID MARGOLICK
(ALFRED A. KNOPF)

This book focuses on the two fights between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling. It recreates the racial climate of the 1930s, puts the fighters in historical perspective, and conveys the incredible importance of their ring encounters. Margolick shows in dramatic fashion how Louis stirred passions and revived interest in boxing long before he beat James Braddock to become heavyweight champion. He captures the demeaning racial stereotyping of The Brown Bomber by the establishment press (including those who were seeking to be kind). And he

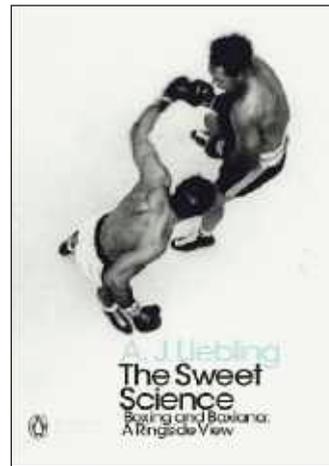
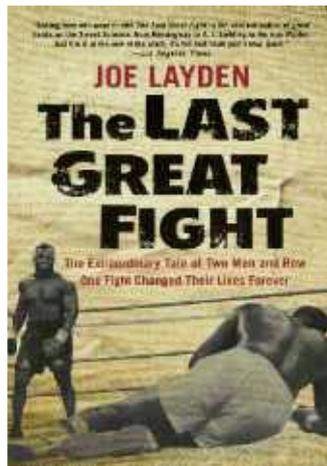
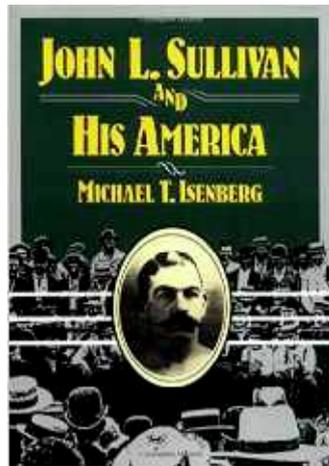
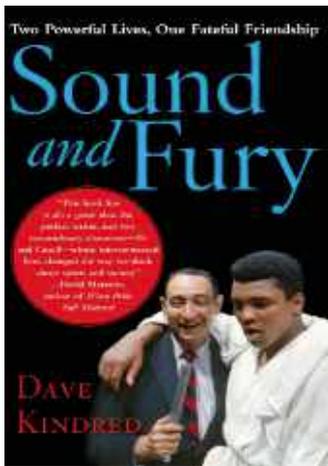
documents in painstaking fashion, contrary to future revisionism, the degree to which Schmeling took part in various Nazi propaganda activities and supported Hitler after defeating Louis in 1936.

BLOOD BROTHERS BY RANDY ROBERTS AND JOHNNY SMITH
(BASIC BOOKS)

This is the most thorough and compelling book yet on the relationship between Cassius Clay and Malcolm X. In the authors' words, it's "the story of how Cassius Clay became Muhammad Ali and the central role Malcolm X played in his life. It is a tale of friendship and brotherhood, love and deep affection, deceit, betrayal, and violence during a troubled time." The events culminating in Malcolm's assassination crackle with tension and are told in particularly dramatic fashion.

JOHN L. SULLIVAN AND HIS AMERICA BY MICHAEL ISENBERG

(UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS) Isenberg mined the mother lode of Sullivan material and crafted a work that's superb in explaining the fighter as a social phenomenon and placing him in the context of his times. More recently, Christopher Klein has put together an engaging read



in *Strong Boy: The Life and Times of John L. Sullivan* (Lyons Press).

A MAN'S WORLD BY DONALD MCRAE (SIMON & SCHUSTER)

The paradox of Emile Griffith's life was crystallised in words that the fighter himself spoke: "I kill a man, and most people forgive me. However, I love a man, and many say this makes me an evil person." McRae explores Griffith's life in and out of the ring with sensitivity and insight. He's also the author of *Heroes Without A Country*, a beautifully written book about Joe Louis and Jesse Owens - two icons who changed America - and *Dark Trade*, a look at the modern boxing scene.

SOUND AND FURY BY DAVE KINDRED (FREE PRESS)

The lives of Muhammad Ali and Howard Cosell intertwined. Kindred explores the ugly underside of Ali's early adherence to Nation of Islam doctrine and provides an intimate look at The Greatest in his declining years. He also paints a revealing portrait of Howard Cosell, turning the broadcast commentator from caricature and bluster into flesh and blood.

AMERICA ON THE ROPES BY WAYNE ROZEN (CASEY PRESS)

This might be the best coffee-table photo book ever devoted to a single fight. Jack Johnson is still a vibrant figure in American history, but James Jeffries has been largely forgotten except as an appendage to Papa Jack. This book gives both men their due and, in so doing, restores Jeffries' life and lustre. The photographs are remarkable and arranged perfectly with the text.

THE SWEET SCIENCE BY A. J. LIEBLING (PENGUIN)

Eighteen articles from the 1950s and early '60s by the legendary dean of boxing writers. A collection of Liebling's later articles has been published under the title *A Neutral Corner*.

THE HARDEST GAME BY HUGH MCILVANNEY (CONTEMPORARY BOOKS)

McIlvanney is the British equivalent of Liebling. He's not just a boxing writer. He's a writer who wrote very well, among other things, about boxing.

ROCKY MARCIANO BY RUSSELL WILSON (UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS)

For sixteen years, Sullivan's

biography of Rocky Marciano stood alone atop the list of books about the Brockton heavyweight. Now Sullivan has been joined by *Unbeaten* (Henry Holt and Company), Mike Stanton's equally honest, penetrating look at Marciano in the context of his times, as a person and as a fighter. Both books are outstanding.

CINDERELLA MAN BY JEREMY SCHAAP (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY)

Schaap does a fine job chronicling the rise of James Braddock to the heavyweight championship at the height of The Great Depression. He also paints a wonderful portrait of Max Baer and explains just how important the heavyweight title was eight decades ago.

SWEET WILLIAM BY ANDREW O'TOOLE (UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS)

A solid biography of light-heavyweight great Billy Conn. The two Louis-Conn fights are the highlight of O'Toole's work, but he also does a nice job of recounting the endless dysfunctional family struggles that plagued Conn throughout his life and the boxer's sad decline into pugilistic dementia.

IN THE RING WITH BOB FITZSIMMONS

BY ADAM POLLACK (WIN BY KO PUBLICATIONS) Pollack has also authored biographies of John L. Sullivan, James Corbett, James Jeffries, Marvin Hart, Tommy Burns, and Jack Johnson. The books are heavily researched and rely almost exclusively on primary sources. Serious students of boxing will enjoy them.

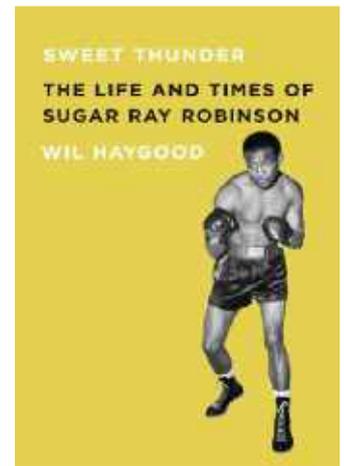
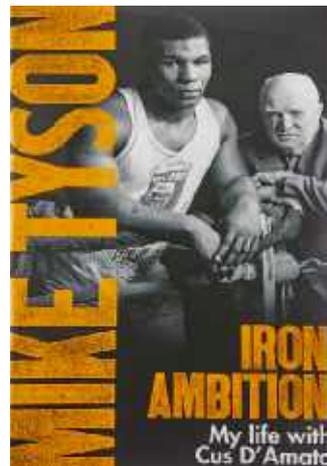
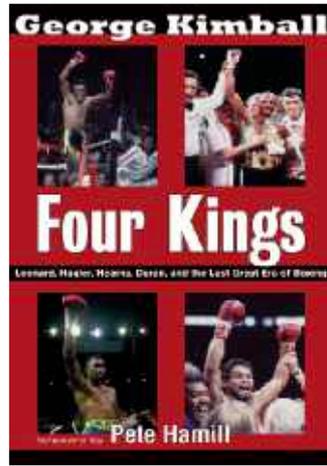
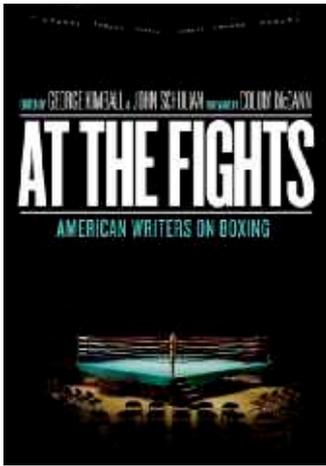
THE LAST GREAT FIGHT BY JOE LAYDEN (ST. MARTIN'S PRESS)

This book is primarily about James "Buster" Douglas's historic upset of Mike Tyson. The saga of Iron Mike has gotten old, but Layden brings new material and fresh insights into the relationships among Douglas, his father (Billy Douglas), manager John Johnson, and co-trainers J. D. McCauley and John Russell. He also gives a particularly good account of the fight itself and how Douglas overcame the fear that had paralysed many of Tyson's opponents.

RINGSIDE: A TREASURY OF BOXING REPORTAGE AND SPARRING WITH HEMINGWAY, BOTH BY BUDD SCHULBERG (IVAN R. DEE, INC.) ►

BOOKS

Thomas Hauser reveals his choices for the best boxing books ever written



► If Schulberg had never written another sentence, he'd have a place in boxing history for the words, "I could of been a contender." These collections of his articles cover seventy years of boxing lore. You might also take a look at Schulberg's novel *The Harder They Fall*.

THE FIRESIDE BOOK OF BOXING, EDITED BY W. C. HEINZ (SIMON & SCHUSTER)

One of the best collections of boxing writing between the covers of a single book. This was reissued in an updated form by Sport Classic Books. But the original 1961 hardcover has a special feel with unique artwork. Heinz also wrote a very good novel entitled *The Professional*. Some of his better essays about sports have been published under the title *At the Top of His Game*.

ONE PUNCH FROM THE PROMISED LAND BY JOHN FLORIO AND OUISIE SHAPIRO (Lyons Press)

The authors do a good job of recounting the saga of Leon and Michael Spinks. The world of abject poverty that they came from is recreated in detail and with feeling. The writing flows nicely, Leon's erratic personality is explored, and the big fights are well-told.

UNFORGIVABLE BLACKNESS: THE RISE AND FALL OF JACK JOHNSON BY GEOFFREY C. WARD

(ALFRED A. KNOPF) This is the companion volume to the PBS documentary by Ken Burns. It's well-written, meticulously researched, and the standard against which future Johnson biographies will be judged. *Jack Johnson: Rebel Sojourner* by Theresa

Runstedtler (University of California Press), which focuses on the international reaction to Johnson, is a nice supplement.

JACK DEMPSEY BY RANDY ROBERTS (GROVE PRESS)

Almost four decades after it was first published, this work remains the most reliable source of information about the Manassa Mauler. Roberts is also the author of *Papa Jack: Jack Johnson and the Era of White Hopes* (Free Press) – a good biography of the most controversial champion in boxing history – and *Joe Louis: Hard Times Man* (Yale University Press), a valuable addition to the literature on Louis.

CHAMPION: JOE LOUIS, BLACK HERO IN WHITE AMERICA BY CHRIS MEAD

(CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS) At the time it was written, this was the most thorough of the Joe Louis biographies. Mead's work serves as a reminder of why the Brown Bomber was so important.

BLACK IS BEST: THE RIDDLE OF CASSIUS CLAY BY JACK OLSEN

(G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS) This is an old one; vintage 1967. But it's a good look at the young Muhammad Ali.

AT THE FIGHTS: AMERICAN WRITERS ON BOXING COMPILED BY GEORGE KIMBALL AND JOHN SCHULIAN

(LIBRARY OF AMERICA) This collection has 50 pieces representing what its overseers call "the very best writing about the fights." More selections from the first half of the twentieth century would have been welcome. Be that as it may; *At The Fights* belongs in

the honours class of boxing anthologies. Schulian is also the author of *Writers' Fighters*, an anthology of his own best work.

THE BIG FIGHT BY SUGAR RAY LEONARD WITH MICHAEL ARKUSH

(VIKING) There's a growing belief among those who seriously study boxing that Sugar Ray Leonard was the best fighter of the past 50 years. Two themes run through *The Big Fight*. The first centres on Leonard's illustrious ring exploits. The second details a life spiraling out of control in a haze of fame, alcohol, and drugs. The book is an interesting passageway into the mind of a great fighter.

ONLY IN AMERICA: THE LIFE AND CRIMES OF DON KING BY JACK NEWFIELD

(WILLIAM MORROW & COMPANY) Give the devil his due. For decades, Don King was one of the smartest, most charismatic, hardest-working men on the planet. Jack Newfield recorded the good and the bad, mostly the bad, in exhaustive detail.

IRON AMBITION BY MIKE TYSON AND LARRY SLOMAN

(Blue Rider Press) A compelling biography of Cus D'Amato as viewed through the prism of his relationship with Iron Mike. Previously, Tyson and Sloman collaborated on an interesting Tyson autobiography entitled *Undisputed Truth*.

GHOSTS OF MANILA BY MARK KRAM

(HARPER COLLINS) Whether or not you agree with Kram's thesis, which seeks to elevate Joe Frazier and diminish Muhammad Ali, this work is an interesting read. *Bouts of Mania*

by Richard Hoffer (Da Capo Press) adds George Foreman to the mix and places the remarkable fights between these three men in historical context, recreating scenes that define the fights and the fighters themselves.

THE PRIZEFIGHTER AND THE PLAYWRIGHT BY JAY TUNNEY

(FIREFLY BOOKS) This is a son's tribute to his father. Jay Tunney writes nicely and understands boxing. This book details the former heavyweight champion's ring career, marriage, and relationship with Nobel-prize-winning playwright George Bernard Shaw.

RICHMOND UNCHAINED BY LUKE G. WILLIAMS

(AMBERLEY PUBLISHING) It's a difficult task to accurately portray a man who's enshrined in myth and lived two centuries ago and then place that man in the historical context of his times. But Williams does just that in recounting the life of Bill Richmond, who rose to prominence as a fighter in Georgian England and then as the trainer of Tom Molineaux.

THE BITTERSWEET SCIENCE EDITED BY CARLO ROTELLA AND MICHAEL EZRA

(UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS) In any anthology, some entries are better than others. Ten of the fifteen essays in *The Bittersweet Science* merit particular praise. They cover a wide range of territory from contemporary issues to dramatic accounts of ring action to an exploration of long-ago boxing history.

THE GREATEST BOXING STORIES EVER TOLD EDITED BY JEFF SILVERMAN

(LYONS PRESS) This is a pretty good mix of fact

and fiction from Jack London and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to Jimmy Cannon and Frank Deford. *Classic Boxing Stories* edited by Paul D. Staudohar (Skyhorse Publishing) is an expanded version of a similar book published previously by Chicago Review Press and is also a good read.

**FOUR KINGS
BY GEORGE KIMBALL**
(MCBOOKS PRESS)

Kimball recounts the epic nine battles contested among Sugar Ray Leonard, Marvin Hagler, Thomas Hearns, and Roberto Duran between 1980 and 1989. It was a special time for boxing fans and more special for those who, like Kimball, experienced the drama firsthand from the inside.

**THE LION AND THE EAGLE
BY IAN MANSON**
(SPORTSBOOKS LTD)

A dramatic recreation of the historic 1860 fight between the English champion, Tom Sayers, and his American challenger, John C. Heenan. Manson sets the scene on both sides of the Atlantic. In reconstructing the life of each fighter, he gives readers a full sense of time and place. For more on the same encounter, *The Great Prize Fight* by Alan Lloyd (Coward, McCann & Geoghegan) is an excellent read.

**SWEET THUNDER: THE LIFE
AND TIMES OF SUGAR RAY
ROBINSON BY WIL HAYGOOD**
(ALFRED A. KNOPF)

This is the first biography to fully explain Robinson's legacy in the ring and his importance out of it. Haygood researches thoroughly and writes well, placing Sugar Ray in the context of Harlem and America in the 1940s and '50s. The six wars between Robinson

and Jake LaMotta are particularly well told.

**SHELBY'S FOLLY
BY JASON KELLY**
(UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS)

Jack Dempsey vs. Tommy Gibbons is the only championship bout that's remembered more for the site than the fight itself. Shelby, Montana, was one of the most improbable and ill-considered venues ever to host a major championship fight. Kelly explains who, what, how, when, and why.

**AT THE FIGHTS: INSIDE THE
WORLD OF PROFESSIONAL
BOXING BY HOWARD SCHATZ**
(SPORTS ILLUSTRATED BOOKS)

Monet captured the essence of water lilies better than a photograph. The same can be said of Schatz's computer-styled images of boxers. Light and shadow are distorted to show movement. The images convey strength and power, motion and emotion. It's an attractive book, printed on heavy glossy 14-by-11-inch stock with faithful photographic reproductions and splendid production values.

LISTON AND ALI BY BOB MEE
(MAINSTREAM PUBLISHING)

There are hundreds of books about Muhammad Ali, but very little good writing about Sonny Liston. This is very good writing about Liston, who is portrayed as a full flesh-and-blood figure rather than a cardboard cutout from the past.

**THE LONGEST FIGHT BY
WILLIAM GILDEA**

(FARRAR STRAUS AND GIROUX) Joe Gans receded long ago into a corner of boxing history. This book is keyed to the historic first fight between Gans and

Battling Nelson, which took place in Goldfield, Nevada, in 1906. Gildea brings Gans to life, crafting a sense of time and place that will enhance any reader's appreciation his subject.

**THE GOOD SON: THE LIFE OF
RAY "BOOM BOOM" MANCINI
BY MARK KRIEGEL**
(FREE PRESS)

Kriegel is a good researcher and a good writer. *The Good Son* treats Ray Mancini with respect but acknowledges his flaws. It also conveys an admirable understanding of the sport and business of boxing. This isn't just a book about Mancini. It's a look into a fighter's soul.

**THE ROAD TO NOWHERE
BY TRIS DIXON**
(PITCH PUBLISHING)

In 2001, Dixon (then an aspiring amateur boxer in England) came to the United States with an eye toward improving his ring skills. Then he changed course. By the time he left America, he was a writer. This book catalogs his journey and the fighters he met. Dixon also authored *Money: The Life and Fast Times of Floyd Mayweather*, the best biography of its subject to date.

**MUHAMMAD ALI:
THE TRIBUTE**

(SPORTS ILLUSTRATED BOOKS) *Sports Illustrated* was one of the first major media outlets to understand that Ali was a great fighter and also that his importance extended well beyond boxing. The *SI* tribute book reflects that understanding in real time. It contains the complete original text of sixteen articles that appeared in the magazine and tracks Ali's life from his origins as Cassius Clay to the glory years as Muhammad Ali and, ultimately, through his courageous end. **BN**



**THOMAS
HAUSER**

Thomas Hauser has authored twenty-eight books about boxing that are excellent reading during the holiday season and every other time of year: *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times*; *Muhammad Ali: A Tribute to The Greatest*; *Waiting for Carver Boyd*; *Mark Twain Remembers*; *The Black Lights*; *Boxing Is*; *The Boxing Scene*; *An Unforgiving Sport*; *The Greatest Sport of All*; *Knockout*; *I Don't Believe It But It's True*; *Chaos, Corruption, Courage, and Glory*; *Muhammad Ali: Memories*; *Muhammad Ali: In Perspective*; *A Beautiful Sickness*; *A Year At The Fights*; *The View From Ringside*; *Brutal Artistry*; *Muhammad Ali & Company*; *The Legend of Muhammad Ali*; *BOX: The Face of Boxing*; *Winks and Daggers*; *And the New*; *Straight Writes and Jabs*; *Thomas Hauser on Boxing*; *A Hurting Sport*; *A Hard World*, *There Will Always Be Boxing*, and *Protect Yourself At All Times*.

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thomashauserwriter@gmail.com

